

Archetypes as symbolic forms

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Abstract: In Jung's psychology, archetypes are biologically inherited supra-individual predispositions of the collective unconscious, and in this paper this controversial theory of archetypes is evaluated in the context of Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms. The main thesis of the author is that with the help of the Cassirerian approach, archetypes can be understood as culturally determined functionary forms organizing and structuring certain aspects of man's cultural activity, namely those predominantly non-cognitive (for example, emotional, numinous, pathological) mental aspects of human life, which remain more or less unarticulated due to their non-discursive nature. The revision the author is proposing revolves around the notion that the archetypal theory can be removed from the rather unfruitful discourse on the genetic inheritance of archetypes. When archetypes are seen as symbolic forms, Jung's theory is in a position to make a potentially valuable contribution to hermeneutical and cultural studies, as archetypes function in this new context as active constituents of human experiences, which give these experiences a non-discursive, symbolic form. Thereby, archetypes can become accessible to historical and cultural analyses, and hermeneutical inquiry into the manifold symbolism of mental (including unconscious) phenomena can be enriched.

Key words: Archetypes, Ernst Cassirer, cultural studies, hermeneutics, philosophy, symbolic forms.

Introduction

Ernst Cassirer (1872–1945) published a three-volume philosophical work entitled *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (*Die Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*) in 1923–1929. In this work Cassirer, a German Jewish philosopher, studies different ways of 'having a world' or modalities of mental activity, like language, myth, and phenomenology of knowledge. The idea of symbolic forms became the cornerstone and life-long project of his systematic philosophy. In this paper I will evaluate Jung's theory of archetypes in the context of Cassirer's thought.

Cassirer and Jung were German-speaking contemporaries living in neighbouring countries and they both were theorists of myth, but still they never referred to each other in their writings. Cassirer was suspicious of psychoanalysis and he apparently disliked Freud's alleged attempt to reduce all the great cultural achievements to 'nothing but' sublimation of basic instincts. This

was against Cassirer's own scholarly attitude and whole *Weltanschauung*, which was rooted in the Enlightenment ideals of human freedom, autonomy of reason and cultural progress. Cassirer perhaps saw Freud as undermining the power of these ideals with his doctrines and consequently avoided a closer study of Freud and his disciples, including Jung. Of all the disciplinary paradigms in the field of psychology, Cassirer was primarily interested in *Gestalt* psychology. This characteristically German brand of psychology was influenced by Kantian philosophy, and the whole German philosophical tradition of mental activity dating from Spinoza (Dutch) and Leibniz which puts an emphasis on the dynamic operations of the mind, including the active processing of sensory data, and Cassirer himself belongs to this tradition with his conceptions of the active agency of the mind and the different modalities of symbolic formation. The exclusion of the 'unconscious' in favour of 'consciousness' and 'mind'/'spirit' (*Geist*) reflects the basis of the scholarly attitude of Cassirer: he was a philosopher of *consciousness*, who was primarily interested in the higher cognitive functions of man – epistemology, science, mathematics. According to Susanne K. Langer, the renowned philosopher of aesthetics who was influenced by Cassirer,

[the] basic differences of *evaluations* of the life process made Cassirer hesitate to make any part of Freud's doctrine his own; at the end of his life he had, apparently, just begun to study the important relationship between 'dynamic philosophy' and the philosophy of symbolic forms.

(Langer 1949, p. 395)

Jung, on the other hand, was by definition a psychologist of the *unconscious* who was preoccupied with the 'lower' or 'deeper' dimensions of man – dreams, fantasies, emotions. He never made any serious effort to understand modern philosophy, especially the two major trends in twentieth century philosophy, continental phenomenology (Husserl and his followers) and the Anglo-Saxon philosophy of language (Wittgenstein and the school which was later to be called 'analytical philosophy'), though he was to a certain extent influenced by Kant and read some of the modern representatives of 'life philosophy', like Nietzsche, William James, and Henri Bergson. He also seemed to display some interest in Karl Popper's philosophy of science (see Brome 1978, p. 14). However, he had no contacts with the contemporary philosophers, whom he seemed to regard as somehow alienated from the living reality. In his interpretation, philosophy is a 'psychic activity' and as such it is *au fond* psychology – in other words, as a discipline, psychology is more fundamental than philosophy, because the psyche is the 'matrix' of all philosophical utterances (Jung 1916, para. 525). Unlike the theories of cognition and other such representatives of the 'university philosophy', 'true philosophy' is a sort of thinking that is able to express the understanding of life. If philosophical teaching expresses the unconscious, it is good philosophy, and if not, it is simply devoid of meaning (Jung 1988, pp. 1066, 1233, 1450). In this peculiar statement, Jung reveals

both his own limited understanding of the nature of philosophy (the only true philosophy is that which studies the unconscious workings of the mind!) and his obsession with the unconscious psyche as an explanatory tool. Here the influence of Schopenhauer on Jung's conception is notable; as is well known, Schopenhauer was the philosopher of 'Will' – the concept which for many students of his philosophy is a near-equivalent (*Begriffs-Ähnlichen*) to the 'unconscious' – and a relentless critic of the academic philosophy (especially Hegel's) of his time.

The unconscious can hardly be called the matrix of highly rational functions, and if the traditional basic dichotomy between reason (*logos*) and imagination or 'non-reason' (*mythos*) is accepted, then Jung can be seen to represent a psychology of *mythos* and Cassirer, on his part, a philosophy of *logos*. This is one of the main reasons why Jung's thought is hardly ever related to Cassirer's philosophy (one remarkable exception is in Progoff 1992. See also Avens 1980 and Nagy 1991, where the author examines Jung's philosophical sources).

Jung and Cassirer were undoubtedly ignoring each other and each other's disciplines, but are they truly representing totally different 'language games', or, following Wittgenstein's vocabulary further, are there any 'family resemblances' to be found in their respective 'games'? My thesis is that there indeed are such resemblances, even though their theoretical premises and disciplinary methods more or less differed from each other. However, my main point in introducing Cassirer to the study of Jung is not to seek similarities between their theories of myth, for example, but to see Jung's psychology of archetypes in a new light.

Points of contact between Jung and Cassirer

Even though Cassirer's background is that of a neo-Kantian epistemologist and theorist of science, his philosophical approach is not incompatible with Jung's psychology. Cassirer started from the Kantian and neo-Kantian paradigm, but from this rather narrowly defined intellectual basis he proceeded to scholarly excursions to other non-cognitive spheres of study. His work on myth, political myth, and other 'non-philosophical' cultural products disengaged him from the mainstream of systematic philosophy and gave him the identity of a philosopher of culture. However, this development is more an enlargement of his earlier philosophical project than an outright rejection of the old ways of doing philosophy and adopting a new language game. There is no 'early' and 'late' Cassirer in the sense there is an 'early' and 'late' Wittgenstein (or Heidegger). The evolution of Cassirer's philosophical project brings him closer to Jung and Jung's cultural theory and this process makes it possible for a student to take these two thinkers together and examine their ideas in conjunction with one another.

First, both Cassirer and Jung – with his theory of archetypes – are idealists in the philosophical terminology: they believed that reality is essentially mental.

What idealists have in common is

the view that what would normally be called 'the external world' is somehow created by the mind. Idealism does not quarrel with the plain man's view that material things exist; rather, it disagrees with the analysis of a material thing that many philosophers have offered, according to which the material world is wholly independent of minds.

(Flew 1985, p. 160)

Cassirer adheres to Kant's transcendental or critical idealism, whereas Jung is close to Hegel's objective or absolute idealism, according to which all that exists is a form of one mind. This monistic idealism accords well with Jung's idea that archetypes are *a priori* structures of the collective unconscious, which, like Hegel's 'Absolute Spirit', is one and indivisible. This distinction is not, of course, absolute, since Cassirer was influenced by Hegel, and Jung regarded Kant as his epistemological teacher. Nevertheless, in their own theoretical contribution they distinctly represent Kantian (Cassirer) and Hegelian (Jung's theory of archetypes) idealism.

Second, there are resemblances between their approaches to symbol and between Jung's psychology of archetypes and Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms. They both emphasize form (symbolic/archetypal) and function (e.g., representation/communication) instead of substance or causality, and characterize man as *animal symbolicum* – more than anything else, man's ability to create and use symbols distinguishes him from (other) animals.

Third, their theories of myth have many similarities. Cassirer's key concept is 'mythical consciousness', and he operates with this concept in a way that resembles Jung's psychological idea of the unconscious myth-forming function, as well as Lévy-Bruhl's theory of the primitive mentality (which influenced Jung). Both Cassirer and Jung seek the meaning of myth in the operations of the human mind, and both tend to neglect the impact of the external forces on the formation and validation of myths. Also, they both have an evolutionary view of myths (myths are 'elementary' or 'archaic' forms of culture) but, at the same time, they stress that in modern societies the mythical function has not disappeared altogether. 'Mythical thought' or an 'unconscious myth-formation' is not a subject of historical study only, but manifests itself even today in phenomena like political myths (Cassirer) or dreams and fantasies (Jung).

Fourth, and last, they both were historical-minded scholars, and they often cited the same authors in their writings (for example, Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, Goethe and other German thinkers of the Romantic era, and Lévy-Bruhl) and drew ideas from the long tradition of Western thought. Cassirer even wrote substantial historical studies of the theories of knowledge, the philosophy of Enlightenment, Renaissance in Italy and Neo-Platonism in seventeenth century England. He was, in fact, both an original philosopher *and* a historian of philosophy. Even in his philosophical work – as in *The Philosophy of Symbolic*

Forms (1955) – he has a constant habit of bringing forth a historical perspective in the discussion. Jung was likewise engaged in a dialogue with the past, and although he never wrote proper historical studies (he lectured about the history of psychology), he was inadvertently participating in a project which can be called ‘the history and evolution of the human mind’. He was occupied with this one theme from his psychoanalytical years until the end of his life, and it is this theme and its variations that give his psychology a distinctive historical flavour.

Perhaps a mention should also be made about their common qualities as scholars: they seemed to share a rare capacity to absorb a large quantity of factual information and to make original constructions built on an already established basis (Cassirer built on Kantian, Jung on Freudian heritage). Furthermore, they retained their intellectual curiosity and willingness to embark on new projects – even in an advanced age when most scholars are already resting on their laurels. In his great erudition and wide-ranging interests, Cassirer was embodying the Enlightenment spirit, especially the polymathic scholarship of the French encyclopaedists, and Jung, in his turn, was carrying out his myth of individuation, which is a life-long project without final goal – or, the goal is the *opus*, the task he is performing. In this project, Jung did not identify himself with the Enlightenment thinkers, but with the alchemists and visionaries (like Lao-Tzu or Meister Eckhardt), who, in Jung’s respectful interpretation, tried to fathom what was going on in their unconscious.

Philosophy of symbolic forms

For my purposes in this paper, the main concepts in Cassirer’s philosophy are ‘symbolic form’ and ‘culture’. Cassirer himself offers a key to understanding the relation between these two concepts: after analysing the question whether it is the structure or the function that has primacy in the explanation of how the diverse realms of thought are connected with each other, and after deciding the matter in favour of function, he sets forth the idea of ‘the critique of reason’ becoming ‘the critique of culture’. What does he actually mean by that, and what is the function of this ‘critique of culture’? Cassirer states:

It seeks to understand and to show how every content of culture, in so far as it is more than a mere isolated content, in so far as it is grounded in a universal principle of form, presupposes an original act of the human spirit. Herein the basic thesis of idealism finds its true and complete confirmation. As long as philosophical thought limits itself to analysis of *pure cognition*, the naïve-realistic view of the world cannot be wholly discredited ... If, however, we take as our starting point not the general concept of the world, but rather the general concept of the culture, the question assumes a different form. For the content of the concept of culture cannot be detached from the fundamental forms and directions of human activity: here ‘being’ can be apprehended only in ‘action’ ... Thus, with all their inner diversity, the various products of culture – language, scientific knowledge, myth, art, religion – become parts of a single great problem-complex: they become multiple efforts, all directed

toward the one goal of transforming the passive world of mere *impressions*, in which the human spirit seems at first imprisoned, into a world that is pure *expression* of the human spirit.

(Cassirer 1955a, pp. 80–1)

This lengthy quote is important because it illuminates the basis of Cassirer's project: to take full account of the diverse cultural forms as human expressions and to see the unity in multiplicity in the goal of these forms; from the phase of the passive receiving of impulses these forms gradually evolve and transform this inert state of man into a dynamic state of active participation, where man is able to develop still higher cultural forms and express the growing complexity of his spirit (*Geist*). This development is not only a process of differentiation and conceptualization of various cultural forms like myth, religion, language and technology but also a process of self-liberation (Cassirer 1972, p. 228).

Thus, although Cassirer transformed the Kantian critique of reason into a 'Cassirerian' critique of culture, he retained, alongside the Enlightenment ideal of human autonomy, the Kantian ethical dimension in his philosophy. Man has the capacity of liberating himself through developing various cultural forms, because this process frees him from the narrow confines of nature, and the actual method for achieving this goal is symbolization. Man is *animal symbolicum* rather than *animal rationale*, like many Western thinkers since Aristotle have claimed, for the latter attribute signifies not so much an empirical fact about human nature as a 'fundamental moral imperative'. Cassirer, the great follower of the Enlightenment tradition, confesses in the middle of the Second World War, how

reason is a very inadequate term with which to comprehend the forms of man's cultural life in all their richness and variety. But all these forms are symbolic forms. Hence, instead of defining man as an *animal rationale*, we should define him as an *animal symbolicum*. By so doing we can designate his specific difference, and we can understand the new way open to man – the way to civilization'

(Cassirer 1972, p. 26)

In Cassirer's philosophy, 'form' has to be understood not in the meaning of substantiality but in the meaning of pure functionalism (Cassirer 1961, p. 24). Forms are not entities nor essences, but functional determinants, which shape our thoughts about the world, but even before this process of *Weltverstehen*, they determine the way the reality in-itself appears to us. We see this reality as something that is 'given' (*Gegeben*) to us, but with a more penetrating analysis we can understand that the 'apparently "given" proves to have passed through certain acts of linguistic, mythical, or logical-theoretical apperception. Only what is *made* in these acts "is"; even in its seemingly simple and immediate nature, what is thus made proves to be conditioned and determined by some primary meaning-giving function' (Cassirer 1955b, p. 94). The perceptual world is not a bundle of formless impressions but a result of certain basic

forms of 'synthesis'. This Kantian thesis is underlined by Cassirer's assertion that

we never find naked sensation as a raw material to which some form is given: all that is tangible and accessible to us is rather the concrete determinacy, the living multi-formity, of a world of perception, which is dominated and permeated through and through by definite modes of formation.

(Cassirer 1955c, pp. 14–5)

The philosophy of symbolic forms is 'concerned with all the forms assumed by man's *understanding* of the world' (Cassirer 1955c, p. 13). 'Symbolic' as such does not belong to the sphere of 'immanence' or 'transcendence', for its significance lies in its capacity to overcome these opposites, which are derived from the metaphysical theory of two worlds. 'Symbolic' is not the one or the other, but it represents the 'one in the other' and 'the other in the one'. In this way, independent and characteristic structures of language, myth, and art are constituted, and each of these structures earns its value through constructing a specific and independent, self-contained world of meaning according to an inherent formative law of its own. So in all of these structures, 'a principle of "objective" formation is at work. They are modes of "growing into being"' (Cassirer 1955c, p. 383). 'Symbolic form' denotes a symbolic expression in its most extensive meaning: the expression of 'mental' contents through perceptual 'signs' and 'images'. The crucial question concerning these forms is whether they are in all their varieties of possible applications based on one fundamental principle, which characterizes them as self-contained and coherent ways of acting (*Grundverfahren*). If there is such an ordering principle, then art, language and myth each as distinct wholes have general characters of symbolic formation. Cassirer believes that this principle is to be found in the 'energy of the mind' (*Energie des Geistes*) which is not content with receiving sense impressions but unites and fills each and every impression with a creative activity of expression (Cassirer 1956, pp. 174–7).

Cassirer had no intention of restricting the number of symbolic forms. In *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1955) he had concentrated on myth, language, and the phenomenology of knowledge, but he also discussed religion and art, and mentioned some other possible candidates for symbolic forms: economy, technology, law and social life (Cassirer 1955b, p. xv). In his later writings he did introduce and analyse new forms: technology, art and history. I agree with D. P. Verene in his assertion that 'for Cassirer any area of culture is potentially a symbolic form; and whether any area of culture is a symbolic form would appear determined by whether it can be shown to have a distinctive logical structure' (Verene 1969, p. 44). The fact that Cassirer chose language as a symbolic form and analysed it in detail is not surprising: he was a pioneer in the philosophy of language; a scholar for whom language is undoubtedly the most fundamental symbolic form. It is *Urphänomen* in the Goethean sense, something that cannot be reduced to or explained by anything

else: 'Language becomes one of the human spirit's basic implements, by which we progress from the world of mere sensation to the world of intuition and ideas' (Cassirer 1955a, pp. 87–8).

Cassirer brings forth three dimensions or functions of symbolic formation: expression (*Ausdruck*), representation (*Darstellung*), and meaning or significance (*Bedeutung*). These functions are formulated ideally or phenomenologically in a Hegelian sense rather than as a historical inquiry in the usual sense of the word. Of these functions, expression is the most elementary and 'concrete' and significance the most conceptual and abstract. This explains the great functionalistic variety of cultural representations: on the one hand we have 'expressive' phenomena like myth and religion, and on the other hand highly developed conceptual systems like mathematics. It is not, however, a simple evolutionary scheme: the functionary stages do not follow one another as a rectilinear continuation or as if there were archaeological layers of these functions, the most elementary of them being at the bottom, the next one in the middle, and the most developed one at the top. It is possible to differentiate these functions from one another because they represent 'qualitatively different modes of signification' (Cassirer 1955c, p. 57).

D. P. Verene points out that when this three-stage system of the development of the mind is 'viewed vertically, consciousness is a series of three stages or functions'. Yet, when this same system is 'viewed horizontally at any stage of its development, consciousness is a collection of variously articulated symbolic forms' (Verene 1969, pp. 44–5). Therefore, these functions do not simply correspond to symbolic forms in a way that, for example, different organs of the human body correspond to the different senses (like skin corresponds to tactile sensation). Rather, they have functional value in the process where we come to have understanding of the world (*Weltverstehen*) or where the world becomes accessible to us. As an example of this we can refer to myth: with the submerging of the *content* of the mythical consciousness it is by no means necessarily indicated that the mental *function* of myth, from which mythical consciousness has originated, is simultaneously submerged. Cassirer underlines this point when he states how 'it can be shown that the spiritual potency, whose first concrete manifestation was myth, asserts itself in a certain respect, and that within the new dimension of theoretical self-consciousness it survives and continues to act in new form, in a kind of metamorphosis' (Cassirer 1955c, p. 79).

After this short examination of some of the main points of Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms it will, perhaps, become understandable why he chose to operate with a concept of 'symbolic form': the latter word denotes the logical structure and continuity of certain cultural products, and the former signifies the fact that these forms are man-made and dependent upon the capabilities of *animal symbolicum* to actively advance their development. *Weltverstehen* implies free activity of the mind, and it requires that the focus of attention should not be directed exclusively to the purely scientific and

exact comprehension of the world (*Weltbegreifen*), but 'to all the forms assumed by man's understanding of the world' (Cassirer 1955c, p. 13). This understanding, for its part, requires an increasing detachment between man and his immediate world, and the achievement of having a world as 'representation' is both the goal and the contribution of the symbolic forms. What distinguishes man from nature is not his 'metaphysical or physical nature', but his work:

It is this work, it is the system of human activities, which defines and determines the circle of 'humanity'. Language, myth, religion, art, science, history are the constituents, the various sectors of this circle. A 'philosophy of man' would therefore be a philosophy which would give us insight into the fundamental structure of each of these human activities, and which at the same time would enable us to understand them as an organic whole.

(Cassirer 1972, p. 68)

Cultural interpretation of archetypes

What I consider a most fruitful effort in relating Jung's thought to Cassirer is a revision of the theory of archetypes. In short, my thesis is that archetypes can be understood as 'symbolic forms'. On what grounds am I entitled to make such a claim? Firstly, if archetypes are symbolic forms, then we can interpret them not as quasi-biological entities but as culturally determined forms, which operate functionally in the same way that the other symbolic forms do: they give an organized and coherent structure to different manifestations of man's cultural activity, and at the same time they express the 'spirituality' of man. Symbolic forms are not transmitted genetically from generation to generation, because they are in their very essence *cultural* products: the medium that transmits symbolic forms is culture, not biology.

Man grows into culture – he is not born with 'cultural determinants' in his psyche. Analogously, man is not born with the collective unconscious, but as he grows up in his cultural environment he adopts both the dominant and some of the 'recessive' or unarticulated but commonly shared notions, beliefs and – to a certain extent, ritualized – ways of behaviour, which undergo very slow changes. In the words of S. G. F. Brandon:

[T]hrough membership of the community or group into which he is born, the individual inherits a common memory of the past which may span many generations. However long or short that span may be, and however vague and mythical the traditions preserved, the individual accordingly becomes aware of a period of time that ranges back far beyond the day of his own birth. He thus realizes that he is part of a great process of existence.

(Brandon 1965, pp. 73–4)

In an unavoidably vague terminology, this 'codex of unarticulated history' can be said to refer to 'mentalities', something which correspond to mental structures without being reducible to any consciously and unambiguously

articulated explanatory motives. This is visible, for example, in the religious beliefs and practices of the traditional communities in some rural areas of Northern Europe – alongside the dominant Protestant tradition, there may still be in operation some aspects of ancient folk traditions, which have their origins not in the Lutheran but Catholic and also pagan beliefs. Jung argued that these ancient traditions are alive in the collective unconscious as archetypes, but I regard as much more plausible the idea that during the cultural evolution these ‘undercurrents’ are simply passed from one generation to another, and as a result of this *cultural* transmission, our culture is not a single monolithic entity but a dynamic process, in which the cultural diversity is comparable to the evolutionary biodiversity in nature.

With my revisionary proposal of the cultural aspect of archetypes, I am not aiming at offering a theory of my own to the ‘science of archetypes’, but rather a cultural ‘common sense’ interpretation, which takes into account the ‘structural’ and ‘formal’ features of archetypes without yielding to the (so far) untenable theory of the genetic inheritance of archetypes. Jung himself, of course, struggled for years in his theoretical conceptualization of the ontological status of archetypes. From the original Lamarckian idea of ‘primordial images’ or ‘characteristics’ he gradually moved on to a more plausible and consistent view, in which archetypes are psychological potentialities rather than some kind of mental substances. Finally, in 1946, Jung himself made an important formal revision, which had already been visible in his texts in one form or another for many years, when he distinguished between (the psychoid) archetype *an-sich* and archetypal representations (Jung 1954). The former is an empty and purely formal structure, only a possibility for manifestation which is given *a priori*, as distinguished from the images, ideas and ways of experience, to which it gives impulse, and the universality of the archetypal representations is based on the idea that this archetype *an-sich* is inherited. Archetypal representations, by contrast, are culture-bound: they are only formed or structured by the inherited archetype *an-sich* – their actual content is culturally determined. This gives a new significance to his theory, even though in Jungian psychology the most important aspect of the archetype continued to be its quality as a biologically inherited structural dominant. In this sense, they were as atemporal and universal as Kant’s categories. Jung remained firm in his insistence on the genetical dimension of his theory and did not display any intention whatsoever to further elaborate this new cultural dimension in his psychology. This acultural (and ahistorical) tendency has become the dominant feature in Jungian psychology, and very few attempts have been made to see the theory of archetypes in a new context (one notable ‘revisionist’ of archetypal theory is J. L. Henderson with his concept of the ‘cultural unconscious’. See Henderson 1991).

Secondly, if archetypes are seen as cultural phenomena, the discussion of their ontological status can be removed from the biological/scientific sphere to that of cultural/hermeneutical studies. From the point of view of science, the

main problem in Jung's theory is perhaps that while it seems to be able to explain almost everything about 'the unconscious', there is no real possibility to verify nor falsify the theory itself and in this sense it is an unbeatable theory – either you just believe it, or you don't. Consequently, theories that cannot lose are not of much use in science. The proper field of study – genetics – which could verify (or, following Popper, falsify) the theory of the inheritance of archetypes, has so far not given any evidential support for this theory – in fact, it has not even studied the whole matter. Nevertheless, this fact does not necessarily imply that the question of archetypes cannot be solved by scientific methods sometime in the future. Jung himself was of the opinion that we can never be able to know what the archetypes really are, and even the profound efforts to explain them are nothing but more or less successful translations from one metaphorical language to another (Jung 1949, para. 271). This statement of Jung is somewhat self-defeating, if we conceive the study of archetypes as a scientific enterprise.

Still, interesting attempts have been made to reconcile archetypes with a scientific view, and a defender of Jung's own position can always ask whether it is not possible to inherit the *tendency* to produce archetypes as symbolic forms. To this question there is of course no conclusive answer, but if we were to take seriously into account the possibility of this inherited tendency, we should first have to try to embark upon a cross-cultural investigation and differentiate in a number of societies or communities those aspects of human life which can be said to follow some archetypal pattern or tendency, and then convince all the doubting Thomases that this or that particular idea, image or practice (such as rituals) is indeed something that has its origin in the structure of the human mind and not in the contingencies of history (and geography) of the different cultural areas, nor in the plain fact that people everywhere tend to display the same basic emotions (benevolence, agitation, awe, feelings of kinship etc.) just because they are humans. Shared beliefs, values and practices of a particular community living at a particular time and place are usually considered to be cultural artefacts which can manifest themselves symbolically in religions, myths (and equivalent narratives) and art. That the alleged universal origin of these artefacts is in the collective unconscious can of course be deduced from the premise of archetypal theory, but then the theory itself functions like the first or major principle in Aristotle's practical syllogism: this principle is initiating and motivating premise which moral philosophers cannot do without, if they want to generate proper action *qua* good in the moral agent, but which in itself is not accessible to the same sort of logical analysis as the theoretical syllogisms where the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises. What I want to stress here is that although archetypes most probably are not what Jung said they are, for many people (including non-Jungians like myself) Jung's archetypal theory is a relevant and interesting conceptual construction and as such well worth rational discussion – like Aristotle's theory of practical rationality is for moral philosophers. Like moral philosophers, the participants

in a dialogue about archetypes can make insightful analysis and thereby enrich the on-going discussion not only of archetypes but of symbolic forms and culture.

Next, I give a few examples of such discussion and compare them with my own view. Philosopher Walter Shelburne thinks that 'Jung's science already incorporates a brave new vision of what it means to be scientific which owes a great deal to the inspiration of relativity and quantum physics' (Shelburne 1988, p. 11). He also takes note of the cultural aspects of archetypes: the 'phenomenological form of the archetypal images are ... a direct result of cultural influence' and 'one archetype may be emphasized in one culture but not in another'. In addition, he admits that 'Jung's method of studying archetypes does not employ an experimental technique' (Shelburne 1988, pp. 33, 122). Yet he sees no adequate reason to abandon or at least question the idea of the genetic nature of the collective unconscious and instead invokes scientific results of experiences in LSD sessions, in which transpersonal, archetypal figures were apparently seen: 'These results seem to constitute *convincing evidence* for the archetypal theory' (Shelburne 1988, p. 138; italics mine).

Even more dubious and inconsequential is his discussion of Edward O. Wilson's controversial 'sociobiology', which he sees as supporting the Jungian view. Far from taking a critical stance towards Wilson's crude biological determinism, according to which human social behaviour is primarily the result of a genetic predetermination, Shelburne sees his 'interesting research' falling 'right in line with the archetypal theory' (Shelburne 1988, p. 139). Another student of Jung, Anthony Stevens, falls right in line with Shelburne in his view that sociobiology as an important new social theory supports Jung's ideas. Stevens, who has a distinctly biological orientation to Jung's psychology, deplores the fact that both psychologists and anthropologists in general have been so slow to face the challenge of ethologists (Stevens 1982, p. 24). Both Shelburne and Stevens seem to assume that man's genetic inheritance is the crucial explanatory factor in the social sciences as well as in the biological sciences – in other words, they believe that *cultural evolution* is largely explained by *biological* and not by cultural concepts.

Sociobiology, which has found little support both in the fields of social studies and natural sciences, is not 'the' perspective of modern evolutionary biology, as Shelburne explicitly claims, and Stephen Jay Gould expresses the general idea behind the criticism directed at sociobiology when he argues convincingly how 'Wilson's perspective lies within the philosophical tradition of reductionism' (Gould 1981, p. 288). It is rather unfortunate for the theory of archetypes if it is understood as a representative of, or corroborated by, biological determinism, since this perspective confines it to the reductive and quasi-scientific language game which closes rather than discloses any fruitful perspectives to archetypal interpretation. When the desperate search for 'scientific' proofs of archetypes is abandoned, the whole matter can be seen as a *hermeneutical* enterprise, in which archetypes are related to and seen in

context with other cultural constituents, like religion, myth, or art. These phenomena are imbued with 'numinous' or other affective and expressive characteristics, but they still manifest themselves *in concreto*, and this fact renders it possible to discuss them rationally.

What do I mean by the concept of 'hermeneutics'? The word refers both to the art of interpretation (usually of texts) and to a type of philosophy that analyses the interpretative method itself. Schleiermacher and Dilthey – as well as Jung – represent the former, methodological hermeneutics, which is historically older than 'ontological' or philosophical hermeneutics advanced in this century first by Heidegger and then by Hans-Georg Gadamer. A modern hermeneutical perspective (of which a prime example is Paul Ricoeur's interpretation of Freud in *Freud and Philosophy* (1977)) emphasizes the role of understanding and human intentionality in different contexts of meaning, which do not allow ultimate 'explanations' to enter the discourse. An interpretation can be viewed as a reciprocal process of understanding between the interpreter and the text or other symbolic referent (like the unconscious in the psychological analysis) which calls for deciphering.

Although Jung himself spoke only a few times about hermeneutics in his writings and never discussed Dilthey, an essential figure in the development of modern '*Geisteswissenschaft*', there are striking similarities between Jung's psychology and hermeneutics of the early twentieth century, especially concerning the importance and meaning of history, the close connection between the subject and object in the act of interpretation and the fundamental role of understanding as the imaginative but publicly verifiable method of translating the subjective experiences of others into an objective knowledge. Jung also referred to the importance of phenomenological approach in psychology. He did not refer to the Husserlian or Heideggerian (whom he seemed to detest) philosophical analysis, but rather to the method of deciphering, describing and amplifying psychic phenomena as they appear in the psychotherapeutic analysis: he maintained, first, that understanding is at bottom a *subjective* phenomenon (Jung 1915, para. 395); second, that scientific theories are instruments and not ends in themselves (Jung 1960, para. 731); third, that even science is a metaphorical language (Jung 1923, para. 428); and, fourth and last, that psychology itself is an element in a myth called 'science' (Jung 1949, para. 302).

In a way, Jung interpreted the unconscious as if it were a hermeneutical inquiry of a text (see Jung 1933, para. 322), and therefore, with due reservations, we can propose that in the field of psychology Jung was developing Dilthey's *Geisteswissenschaft* to the direction of 'depth hermeneutics' with his studies of dreams, mental disturbances, myths, religions, and such historical movements as Gnosticism and alchemy. If you now begin to think that Jung identifies himself as a hermeneutical scholar, you are soon bound to be discouraged by Jung's counterbalancing arguments concerning the ontological and methodological status of his psychology and his self-identity: the recurrent claim that he is an empiricist and scientist and not a philosopher/metaphysician,

and that psychology is an empirical science which deals with natural scientific facts.

This inherent complexity – and confusion – which manifests itself, for example, in Jung's conflicting views about the scientific status of psychology, makes it difficult to satisfactorily identify the true nature of his work. Here lies one of the main reasons for Jung's somewhat idiosyncratic language: although he made novel and innovative psychological observations, his mode of discourse was traditional and occasionally at odds with his intentions. This inconsistency reveals itself clearly in his theory of archetypes, which he persistently presented as if archetypes were intelligible within the natural scientific paradigm.

What I am suggesting here is that the hermeneutical method of cultural studies is a valid and fruitful approach to archetypes, if you accept as your ontological premise the idea that archetypes are symbolic – that is to say, cultural – forms. This approach qualifies you to see archetypes as one form among many other forms, and thus to contextualize them and to relate a study of archetypes to other interpretations of cultural products. As biological quasi-entities, they easily end up being looked at in terms of socio-biological determinism, natural philosophical speculation (for example, archetypes manifest the creative union – *unio mystica* – between mind and matter) or religious and mystical doctrines. It is undoubtedly true that by the very nature of Jung's own explication of archetypes they are easily seen in the above-mentioned contexts. However, the fact that he himself neglected the further development of their cultural aspects gives no reason to his students to act likewise – unless they take his ideas as a religious dogma.

The third and last aspect in this discussion of archetypes as symbolic forms concerns, on the one hand, Cassirer's philosophy itself, and, on the other hand, the significance of archetypes in cultural studies. So far, the focus of my attention has been on the re-interpretation of archetypes, but now I want to stress the potential value of Jung's theory for the studies of culture in general, and for Cassirer's philosophy in particular. As regards the latter, with his theory of archetypes Jung expands the notion of symbolic forms to cover the non-cognitive functions operating in the relations between man and his culture. In Jung's psychology, archetypes are structural dominants, which give form to unconscious activities, such as dreams, fantasies, and certain strongly felt experiences like love, hate, and the feeling of completeness or 'oceanity'. These affective and emotional dimensions are an integral part of human life, yet they have traditionally been neglected subjects of study in the fields of history, social sciences and philosophy, where the emphasis has been laid on the cognitive faculties, institutional structures, and political and economic history. In recent decades, this paradigm of cultural studies has begun to change, and a tendency to study man in his immediate social surroundings and not just as subject to the collective social and historical forces has manifested itself, for example, in the microhistorical approaches and the historical studies of everyday life. There is a distinct potentiality in Jung's psychology to make a contribution

to this paradigm with its emphasis on emotional, numinous, pathological and other 'abnormal' yet common aspects of human life.

In addition, at the cultural level the idea of archetypes as symbolic forms can be useful when the question of the 'mentalities' of a nation or certain communities (like groups who call themselves 'environmentalists') are under discussion. Within a nation or among the people of a given culture there undoubtedly are certain supra-individual notions, beliefs and ways of behaviour which mentally distinguish these nations and peoples from other such collectives. Considering Finland, Katja Broner-Bauer, a Finnish professor of architecture, has suggested that Finns are affected by certain characteristic archetypes – like the archetype of silence, of space, of snow, of forest – in their relations to the world, and in particular to nature, and that these archetypes manifest themselves in the Finnish architecture.

To approach these mentalities with the help of archetypes as symbolic forms would be of descriptive value, since as an interpretative tool Jung's modified theory is in a position to contribute to the ongoing dialogue concerning the processes of *Weltverstehen*; in particular, it may help to see our familiar surroundings (like architecture and geography) and our attitudes towards the world (or *Weltanschauung*) in a new light. If the unconscious has effects upon the individual life, it can be seen to operate at a social level, too. Thus archetypes function as symbolic forms, which direct and structure man's cultural and non-cognitive experiences (*Erlebnisse*) in a collective 'mental infrastructure'.

Cassirer never explicated the concept of the unconscious, nor did he ever really study the non-cognitive aspects of man's mind. In his philosophy, there was very little room for the irrational, instinctual and emotional, and even in his theory of mythical thought, the emphasis lies on the relations between mythical consciousness and language, mythical ideas concerning time, space, and number, and the primitive man's ability, or rather inability, to do logical thinking. Although Cassirer refrains from using a word like the unconscious, 'mythical consciousness' is in its actual use very close to the concept of 'mythical unconscious'. According to Silvia Ferretti, Cassirer 'continues to find there [in myth] the faculty of distinguishing; that is to say, it is nevertheless consciousness, which he cannot define as unconscious and obscure without exposing himself to the same treatment he so often reserved for Bergson – being accused of mysticism' (Ferretti 1989, p. 121).

Revising Jung's conception of the archetypes can bring a new, non-cognitive dimension to the 'family' of symbolic forms, and thereby enlarge and enrich their validity and scope. An insightful student of Cassirer, David Bidney, maintains that symbolic forms are 'organs of reality', and that 'there are a limited number of archetypal cultural phenomena which constitute the main categories of cultural reality' (Bidney 1949, p. 497). Analogously, Jung himself sometimes spoke of archetypes as 'organs of the pre-rational psyche' and as 'forms' or 'categories' of imagination (Jung 1957, para. 845), and if these 'pre-rational' and 'imaginal' aspects are seen in the context of Cassirer's 'organs of

reality', they give a new sense both to Jung's and Cassirer's theories. In the case of Cassirer, incorporating the dimensions of 'non-sense' and 'imagination' – or, in one word: the unconscious – gives a more complete and, in a way, realistic picture of *animal symbolicum* without, however, having to stretch this analogy unnecessarily far by making proposals about the Jungian archetypal nature of Cassirer's symbolic forms.

The archetypal theory and the philosophy of symbolic forms are in a position to compensate each other by stressing the particular aspect that the other theory has neglected: Cassirer brings the concept of 'culture' to the theory of archetypes, and Jung, in his turn, brings the concept of the 'unconscious' to the theory of symbolic forms. At the same time, their theories can be seen as means of finding functional unities underlying the variety of cultural products.

Conclusion

If we have a collective universal psyche, then the individually experienced symbols that arise from this matrix are necessarily collective and universal, but if we conceive this 'collectivity' not in quasi-genetical but in cultural terms, we can, for example, look upon the child archetype, which Jung discusses in his essay 'The psychology of the child archetype' (Jung 1949), as an example of the culturally transmitted symbolic form, which functions as a more or less unarticulated but active constituent. As such it gives us insight into the crucial dilemmas of the human mind, such as how to reconcile traditional and progressive ideals in the cultural sphere on the one hand, and the seemingly opposing determinants (for example, instinct and spirit) of one's mind on the other hand. I think that these questions – to which Jung refers in his essay – and their symbolic formulations are universal enough to be regarded as 'archetypal'. But I also think that the child as an archetypal representation of such questions is not necessarily based on the biological fact; on the contrary, it is probably based more on strictly cultural and historical facts. If such a thing as the development of consciousness can be viewed as the phenomenological development of symbolic forms, which imply man's increasing ability to transform the passive world of mere sense perceptions and impressions to a world in which man expresses and gives form (for example, language) to his objectifying spirit, then there is a well-grounded reason to believe that archetypes, such as 'the child', are in fact symbolic residues of cultural evolution, which give an 'irrational' or non-discursive form to some of the basic concerns of humanity. Moreover, these concerns are easily definable as 'archetypal', as their symbolic representations seem to follow certain pre-determined universal patterns, which characterize Jung's 'archetypes as biological structures'.

If archetypes, such as 'the child', are indeed symbolic forms, then they are accessible to the historical and cultural analyses, which simultaneously push the hermeneutical inquiry into fresh regions of study: the manifold symbolism

of the unconscious, 'the unconscious' indicating not only a psychological but also a cultural concept, 'the reality unspoken', or, as John R. Searle has explicated in his conception of the four different notions of the unconscious, 'mental phenomena that just do not happen to form the content of my consciousness at any given point in time. Thus, most of my beliefs, desires, worries, and memories are not present to my consciousness at any given moment, such as the present one. Nonetheless, they are all *potentially* conscious' (Searle 1992, p. 173). If, however, there are collective mental phenomena that manifest themselves symbolically, then there already exist cultural *products* that are potential objects of cultural *studies*. And if archetypes are symbolic representations of such mental phenomena, then archetypes as symbolic forms are conceivable within the limits of a given cultural context, remaining at the same time both collective – because the mental conditions that produce the archetypes are not culture-bound – and continuous, because as a symbolic form it signifies a Cassirerian 'unity in multiplicity', a functional determinant, which shapes our unconscious beliefs, desires, worries, and memories by giving them a symbolic outlet. This requires a sort of intuitive or expressive act of consciousness but not an overall intellectual comprehension of the symbol in question. Thereby archetypes as symbolic forms can become meaningful as potential subjects of study even for the historians, who as a rule are concerned with the historical contingencies and cultural variables and not with the psychic invariables like Jungian archetypes.

Therefore, this short account of the relations of the archetypal theory to Cassirer's symbolic forms should not be seen as a negative exercise in debunking, offering nothing in return once the alleged weaknesses of Jung's theory are exposed. I have criticized and questioned some of Jung's – and his students' – ideas in the light of a different view on his theories. My intention has been to draw a positive conclusion by demonstrating how Jung's psychology can acquire a new cultural meaning when it is seen in the context of the philosophy of symbolic forms, and instead of a Kantian epistemological, biological, or scientific approach to archetypes, I have proposed a cultural and hermeneutical approach. My central thesis is that it will be useful to the archetypal theory if it is possible to relate archetypes to other symbolic forms and see them as *culturally*, not biologically, determined. With this procedure, Jung's theory may lose some of its idiosyncratic and imaginative charm, but it may also gain a new validity and legitimacy. In this way, it can also be evaluated as a theoretical construction and applied as a methodological tool just like any other cultural theory. As a language game, it can have family resemblances with other 'games' – and not just with Mircea Eliade's, who also spoke of archetypes – and overstep the boundaries of the Jungian discourse of archetypes. In its turn this expansion could encourage further discussion about the archetypes in culture and about the theory itself.

Summary

My principal argument in this paper concerns the cultural aspect of the archetypal theory: in the context of Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, archetypes can be understood as culturally determined functionary forms organizing and structuring certain aspects of man's cultural activity, namely those predominantly non-cognitive (for example, emotional, numinous, pathological) mental aspects of human life, which because of their non-discursive nature remain more or less unarticulated. The cultural aspect of the archetypal theory was suggested by Jung himself in 1946, when he distinguished between the deeply unconscious, universal invariable called 'archetype *an-sich*' and the archetypal ideas, images and ways of experience, which are culturally determined and thereby subject to modifications and variations. Jung himself did not further elaborate this potential cultural dimension of his archetypal theory, and the revision I am proposing in this study revolves around the notion that his theory can be removed from the rather unfruitful discourse on the genetic inheritance of archetypes, as genetics – or, strictly speaking, any branch of science based on biological premises – has so far not given any evidential support for the much-discussed thesis of the inheritance of archetypal structures.

I also make a further suggestion that the theory of archetypes as symbolic forms can make a contribution to hermeneutical studies, as archetypes function in this new context as more or less unarticulated but active constituents of human experiences, which give these experiences a non-discursive, symbolic form. Through a revision of the archetypal theory with the help of Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, I explicated in this paper the idea that when archetypes are not seen as psychic invariables, they can become accessible to the historical and cultural analyses, and the hermeneutical inquiry into the manifold symbolism of mental (including unconscious) phenomena is thereby potentially enriched.

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